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# FACTS ABOUT THE WORKING CHILDREN OF CINCINNATI, AND THEIR BEARING UPON EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS

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This paper deals with the following series of facts about the working children of Cincinnati: the number who have left the schools to go to work each year since records have been kept; a classification of the children who left during the year September 1, 1911, to September 1, 1912, showing the type and location of the schools from which they come; their age, their sex, and their school grade; a tabulation of the kinds of occupations they engaged in; a study of wages; and an investigation of economic necessity as a factor in child labor.<sup>1</sup>

The office which issues working certificates in Cincinnati is—like all similar offices in Ohio—a subdivision of the office of the Superintendent of Schools. When the Child Labor law of 1910 went into effect, a bureau of research to investigate various phases of the problems of child labor, vocational guidance, and industrial education was formed through the agency of Miss M. Edith Campbell of the Schmidlapp Bureau, and Mr. E. N. Clopper, of the National Child Labor Committee. Mr. Schmidlapp contributed half the funds for this new bureau, and a group of public-spirited business men made up the other half. To this Bureau, which we sometimes call the Vocation Bureau when pressed for a name, Mr. Dyer, who was then superintendent of schools, turned over the management of the work certificate office.

<sup>1</sup> The tabulations presented in this paper are the work of many hands. For the original classification, month by month, I am chiefly indebted to volunteer workers—Miss Lisette Friend, Miss Claire Nelter, and Miss Alice Eichberg. Another volunteer worker, Mrs. Agnes Senior Seasongood, did most of the work of tabulating wages. Miss Rose Rankins and Mr. William Spencer, of the office force, made out and verified the final tables. Miss Louise Boswell, with the assistance of Mrs. Charlotte Rust Fischer, both of the office force, made the study of economic necessity as a factor in child labor.

The scope of the investigation includes, first, working out a good office system<sup>1</sup> to accord with the provisions of the new law, and keeping careful records to show the effect of the law; and secondly, carrying out a comprehensive investigation with a limited series of children, an investigation which involves a study of their physical and mental growth under conditions of industry, a study of the industries in which they are employed, a careful and detailed industrial history for each child studied, and an investigation of the homes. The present paper deals only with results obtained in working out the system for the office, not with those of the special research.

The Child Labor law of Ohio, requires that a child shall be at least fourteen years of age,<sup>2</sup> and shall have completed the fifth grade in school before he is allowed to begin work. Each work certificate must be issued to a definitely named employer, on the authority of a contract signed by that employer. When the child changes his position, the previous employer is required to return the certificate to the issuing office, which then reissues it to the new employer upon the receipt from him of a signed contract. These regulations thus give the work certificate office a large measure of supervision of all working children until the sixteenth birthday, when a certificate is no longer required.

Through careful co-operation with the schools, the truancy department, and the factory inspectors, the law is well enforced, so that we feel confident that the records in the office are now fairly complete for all the working children of the city under sixteen years of age. The office is keeping not only the necessary records, but many additional notes with regard to wages and conditions of employment. Only a small part of the information on our cards has as yet been tabulated, but enough facts to be of interest, and we hope of value, to teachers, are now at hand.

#### NUMBER OF WORK CERTIFICATES ISSUED EACH YEAR SINCE 1904

The old books used in issuing certificates, containing a stub for each certificate issued, are in the possession of the office, and

<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed account of the method of administering the Child Labor law, see *The Survey*, August 9, 1912.

<sup>2</sup> In August, 1913, a new law went into effect which raises the age to sixteen for girls and fifteen for boys. The school grade was raised proportionately.

the figures presented are taken directly from the books. The first records are dated, March, 1903. The number of certificates issued during the first sixteen months was 1,018, a number so small that it means no attempt to enforce the law. The continuous record begins in September, 1904, and the numbers for each year, from September 1 to September 1, are as follows:

1904-5.....	2,550	1908-9.....	2,856
1905-6.....	2,623	1909-10.....	3,348
1906-7.....	4,218	1910-11.....	2,800
1907-8.....	2,053	1911-12.....	2,366

The totals for the years previous to the year 1908-9 are of doubtful significance, since during that period there was very little systematic effort to enforce the child labor laws. The state factory inspector spent several months of the year 1906-7 in Cincinnati investigating the conditions of child labor, and with the assistance of the truant officers, he sent to the certificate office a large number of children who had been working without certificates—hence the very large number of certificates for that year, 4,218, which is almost a thousand more than in any other year. The very small number issued in 1907-8, 2,053, is thought to be the effect of the panic, which closed so many industries, thus lessening the chances of employment. From 1907-8 to 1909-10, the numbers increased again, an increase due to the two factors of greater business prosperity and better factory inspection. From the year 1909-10, down to the present time, one can be sure that the numbers correspond closely to the number of children actually at work. The drop from 3,348 in 1909-10, to 2,800 in 1910-11, is the effect of the Child Labor law which went into effect in July, 1910. This law reduced the number of eligible children by establishing a higher educational requirement (i.e., the completion of the fifth grade in school). It also limited the number of children to the number of available positions, since it required every child to present a written promise of work before he was allowed to take out a certificate. At the same time, it served to decrease the number of positions open to children. Many employers preferred to dispense with juvenile labor, rather than to bother with signing cards, returning certificates, and making reports about the children.

The establishment of the compulsory continuation schools in September, 1911, reduced the number of working children still further—to 2,366 in 1911-12. The continuation school acted in two ways. It reduced yet more the number of positions open to children, since some employers are unwilling to excuse the children from work for the required four hours a week of school. The regulation which exempts children who have completed the eighth grade from attendance on continuation schools, gives a practical value to the completion of the grammar-school course which serves to hold many children in school for that purpose. An increase in the proportion of children who had completed the eighth grade from 13 per cent in 1910-11 to 19 per cent in 1911-12, demonstrates this tendency. Doubtless the greater number of fifteen-year-old children (22 per cent in 1911-11 and 27 per cent in 1911-12) is another expression of the same fact. It is probable that when the readjustment to the new requirements is complete, the total number of certificates issued will increase again. The first few months of the year beginning September, 1912, show an increase in numbers over the corresponding months of the previous year. It will be interesting to see whether the totals under the new system will, within a few years, equal the totals under the old.

#### STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1911-12

(Table I; Charts I, II, III, and IV)

The statistics for the year 1911-12 have been tabulated more in detail, and more accurately than those for any previous year. Cross-classifications were made which served as checks on one another, and insured absolute correctness. The important facts are as follows:

The type and location of the schools from which the Working Children came, and the sex and age of the children (Table I; Charts I, II, III, and IV).

Of the 2,366 working certificates issued during the year, 1,996, or 84.4 per cent, were to children from the schools of the city of Cincinnati, and 370, or 15.6 per cent, to those from schools outside of the city (Chart I).

There is but a slight difference in sex, 52.8 per cent boys and

TABLE I  
SHOWING THE TYPE AND LOCATION OF THE SCHOOLS FROM WHICH THE WORKING CHILDREN CAME, AND THE SEX AND AGE OF THE CHILDREN

Month	CINCINNATI SCHOOLS										OTHER SCHOOLS										Grand Total		
	Public					Parochial					Public					Parochial							
	Boys		Girls		Total	Boys		Girls		Total	Boys		Girls		Total	Boys		Girls		Total			
	14	15	14	15		14	15	14	15		14	15	14	15		14	15	14	15			14	15
September.....	85	33	62	18	198	62	17	49	10	138	5	5	13	9	32	3	6	14	2	25	393		
October.....	47	19	37	20	123	40	5	38	8	91	3	3	7	2	15	5	1	17	4	27	256		
November.....	28	16	29	15	88	29	4	29	7	69	3	3	4	6	16	3	2	8	0	13	186		
December.....	15	6	13	7	41	14	4	18	2	38	1	2	3	6	12	4	0	3	1	8	99		
January.....	24	10	19	7	60	33	3	23	5	64	5	3	3	1	12	2	0	5	0	7	143		
February.....	19	11	20	13	63	22	7	29	9	67	1	7	3	2	13	2	1	2	3	8	151		
March.....	25	16	24	9	74	18	8	19	4	49	2	1	4	3	10	2	2	5	0	9	142		
April.....	30	16	16	14	76	24	1	16	5	46	5	4	2	0	11	6	2	3	3	14	147		
May.....	24	18	18	10	70	28	2	15	4	49	7	1	3	3	14	2	3	6	3	14	147		
June.....	70	31	27	24	152	39	7	38	5	89	17	5	14	3	39	3	3	7	1	14	294		
July.....	46	20	37	22	125	24	2	35	7	68	6	2	3	3	14	3	4	4	2	13	220		
August.....	32	12	32	15	91	30	7	24	6	67	4	4	4	2	14	7	1	8	0	16	188		
Total.....	445	208	334	174	1,161	363	67	333	72	835	59	40	63	40	202	42	25	82	19	168	2,366		

47.2 per cent girls (Chart II). In the previous year, the girls were slightly in excess of the boys—50.7 per cent girls and 49.3 per cent boys.

The public schools furnished 1,363, or 57.6 per cent of the whole number, and the church schools 1,003, or 42.4 per cent (Chart III).

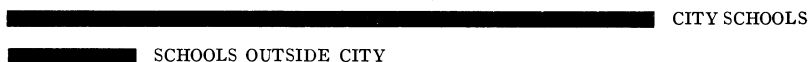


CHART I



CHART II



CHART III

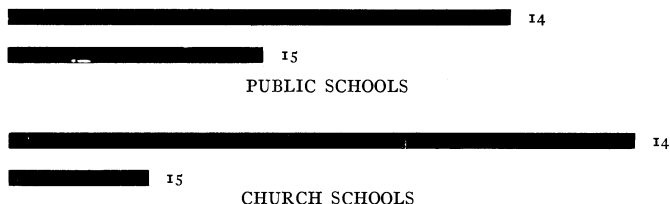


CHART IV—AGE

Since the total enrolment of the church schools is not made public, it is impossible to compare exactly the proportion of those leaving, to the total enrolment in the two cases. The usual estimate is that the public schools have at least twice and perhaps more than twice as many children as the church schools. Since the total number from the church schools is only 15 per cent less than the number from the public schools, the proportion of those leaving the church schools must be from one and one-half to two times as great as the proportion leaving the public schools. For the sake of comparisons with other cities, it may be of interest to

state that the proportion of children who left the public schools of the city to go to work was 3 per cent of the total enrolment of the grades below the high school.

Certificates may be taken out at any time between the fourteenth and the sixteenth birthdays. In making the classification of age, any child who took out his certificate before the fifteenth birthday is classified as fourteen, and any who took it out on or after the fifteenth birthday, as fifteen. Of the total number, 1,721, or 72.7 per cent, were fourteen years of age, and 645, or 27.3 per cent, were fifteen. This proportion figured separately for boys and girls remains the same to a tenth of 1 per cent. A decided difference in proportion appears, however, when it is figured separately for the two types of school. There were 1,363 public-school children, of whom 901, or 66.1 per cent, were fourteen years, and 462, or 33.9 per cent, fifteen. Of the 1,003 church-school children, 820, or 81.7 per cent, were fourteen years of age, and 183, or 18.3 per cent, fifteen (Chart III). Reference has already been made to the increase in the proportion of fifteen-year-old children from 22 per cent in 1910-11 to 27 per cent in 1911-12, but since the record has never before been made out separately for the two types of school, we have no way of knowing how this increase is apportioned between them.

#### THE SCHOOL GRADE COMPLETED BY WORKING CHILDREN

(Tables II, III, and IV; Chart V)

The facts with regard to the grade completed by these children can be seen in detail in Table II for the public-school children, and Table III for the church-school children. They are summed up in Table IV. If one considers only the totals including both types of school (Table IV, last two columns), it appears that approximately equal numbers came from the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades. The same relationship holds for the year 1910-11. Previous to that year, statistics are based, not upon the grade completed, but upon the grade in which the child was registered when he left school, and are, therefore, not comparable.

The analysis of grade carried a step farther to the two types of school, shows an interesting difference between them. In the case



TABLE II  
SHOWING THE GRADE COMPLETED BY CHILDREN LEAVING THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO GO TO WORK  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Grade	5				6				7				8				9 and 10				Total
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls		
	14	15	14	15	14	15	14	15	14	15	14	15	14	15	14	15	14	15	14	15	
September.....	38	14	18	2	23	12	21	8	21	5	19	10	6	16	5	1	1	1	1	2	230
October.....	12	9	5	6	12	2	19	7	15	9	11	6	11	2	9	3	0	0	0	0	138
November.....	9	9	11	5	8	0	11	1	12	4	8	6	2	3	3	7	0	3	0	2	104
December.....	8	1	6	2	5	1	3	1	2	3	5	6	1	3	2	3	0	0	0	1	53
January.....	13	3	5	2	9	3	12	4	4	7	4	1	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	72
February.....	7	6	11	5	4	7	5	2	6	3	4	7	3	2	2	0	0	0	1	1	76
March.....	9	8	11	4	10	6	10	4	4	4	2	2	4	0	5	2	0	1	0	0	84
April.....	13	9	5	5	15	7	7	3	6	3	4	5	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	87
May.....	6	8	4	3	19	7	12	3	3	4	2	2	2	0	3	5	1	0	0	0	84
June.....	21	13	6	10	24	8	16	4	19	4	10	5	20	8	0	3	3	3	1	2	191
July.....	20	7	16	9	10	4	7	3	12	4	7	1	7	5	10	8	3	2	0	4	139
August.....	6	4	16	5	8	6	12	2	8	4	3	2	13	1	5	5	1	1	0	3	105
Totals.....	162	91	114	58	147	63	135	42	112	52	79	55	73	31	66	46	10	11	3	15	1,363

TABLE III  
SHOWING THE GRADE COMPLETED BY CHILDREN LEAVING THE CHURCH SCHOOLS TO GO TO WORK  
CHURCH SCHOOLS

Grade	5				6				7				8				9 and 10				Total
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls		
	14	15	14	15	14	15	14	15	14	15	14	15	14	15	14	15	14	15	14	15	
September.....	13	5	8	2	12	5	21	1	23	5	17	6	17	6	15	3	0	2	2	0	163
October.....	12	2	15	2	16	1	11	1	13	2	22	6	4	1	7	3	0	0	0	0	118
November.....	5	0	5	0	14	1	12	3	7	2	14	2	6	3	6	2	0	0	0	0	82
December.....	7	0	3	1	4	1	7	0	4	0	9	0	3	2	2	1	0	1	0	1	46
January.....	13	1	4	1	11	0	6	1	5	1	10	2	6	1	7	1	0	0	1	0	71
February.....	5	4	8	1	8	2	8	3	5	1	12	3	6	0	3	5	0	1	0	0	75
March.....	3	3	3	0	6	3	6	0	8	3	9	3	3	3	1	6	1	0	0	0	58
April.....	1	1	6	2	11	0	6	1	12	0	3	2	6	2	4	3	0	0	0	0	60
May.....	11	0	3	2	6	0	8	1	6	1	5	3	3	3	5	3	0	1	0	0	63
June.....	9	3	14	1	5	1	13	0	14	2	10	3	11	3	8	2	3	1	0	0	103
July.....	5	1	4	1	7	2	6	0	5	0	16	4	10	3	12	3	0	1	1	1	81
August.....	9	1	7	1	6	1	9	0	9	2	6	1	12	4	8	4	1	0	2	0	83
Total.....	93	21	80	14	106	17	113	11	111	19	133	33	91	29	83	31	4	6	6	2	1,003

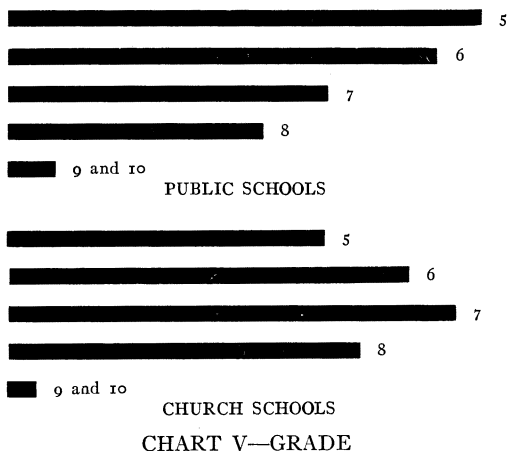
of the public school, the largest number of children—31.2 per cent—left from the fifth grade, and the numbers decreased steadily to the eighth grade. In the case of the church school, the smallest number

TABLE IV

A SUMMARY OF THE GRADE COMPLETED BY CHILDREN LEAVING SCHOOL TO GO TO WORK

GRADE	PUBLIC SCHOOLS						CHURCH SCHOOLS						ALL SCHOOLS	
	Boys		Girls		Total	Percent- age	Boys		Girls		Total	Percent- age	Total	Percent- age
	14	15	14	15			14	15	14	15				
5.....	162	91	114	58	425	31.2	93	21	80	14	208	20.8	633	26.7
6.....	147	63	135	42	387	28.4	106	17	113	11	247	24.6	634	26.8
7.....	112	52	79	53	296	21.7	111	19	133	33	296	29.5	592	25.1
8.....	73	31	66	46	216	15.8	91	29	83	31	234	23.3	450	19.0
9 and 10.....	10	11	3	15	39	2.9	4	6	6	2	18	1.8	57	2.4
Total.....	504	248	397	214	1,363	100.0	405	92	415	91	1,003	100.0	2,366	100.0

left from the fifth grade (20.8 per cent), the numbers increased to the seventh grade, and then dropped a bit to the eighth (Table IV; Chart V). In spite, then, of the fact that the children from the



church schools were younger than those from the public schools, there were many more of them in the higher grades. The difference is not easy to interpret. Doubtless one element in it is the

fact that a larger proportion of the total enrolment of the church schools left to go to work than in the case of the public schools. While the public schools sent us chiefly retarded children, the church schools sent us more of the children who were up to grade. It is possible that differences in the method of grading children are also a factor in the result.

## THE RETARDATION OF WORKING CHILDREN

(Table V; Chart VI)

The facts about the school grade of working children have been figured out more accurately in terms of retardation (Table V). The basis of computing retardation allows a leeway of more than a year. Only those children are called retarded who have completed the sixth grade or less at fourteen years. It is to be borne in mind

TABLE V

SHOWING AMOUNT OF RETARDATION AMONG CHILDREN LEAVING SCHOOL TO GO TO WORK

	PUBLIC SCHOOLS										CHURCH SCHOOLS										GRAND TOTAL
	Normal		Retarded		Ahead		Total	Normal		Retarded		Ahead		Total							
	No.	Percent- age	No.	Percent- age	No.	Percent- age		No.	Percent- age	No.	Percent- age	No.	Percent- age								
Boys. . . . .	226	30.1	515	68.5	11	1.4	752	237	47.7	256	51.5	4	0.8	497	1,249						
Girls. . . . .	204	33.4	402	65.8	5	0.8	611	249	49.2	251	49.6	6	1.2	506	1,117						
Totals . . . . .	430	31.5	917	67.3	16	1.2	1,363	486	48.5	507	50.5	10	1.0	1,003	2,366						

that in this case, fourteen may indicate any point between the fourteenth and fifteenth birthdays. In the same way, a child who has completed not more than the seventh grade at fifteen is retarded. A child who has completed the seventh or eighth grades at fourteen is considered normal; likewise a child who has completed a grade above the eighth at fourteen is called ahead of grade. On this basis, 67 per cent of the public-school children, and 50 per cent of the church-school children who left school to go to work were retarded. We do not know the retardation within the church schools, but within the public school during the same year, the

retardation for the group of children under sixteen years, and in the ninth grade and below, was 28.7 per cent.<sup>1</sup> Of this same group 67.1 per cent were normal, and 4.2 per cent ahead of grade. The

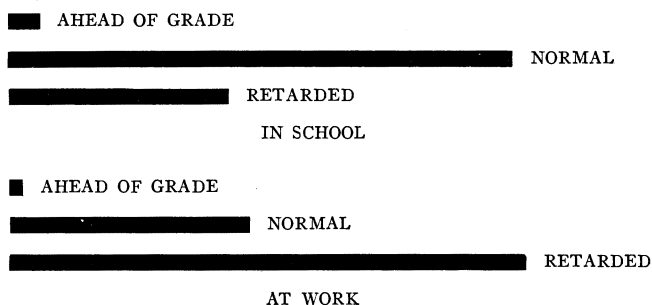


CHART VI—RETARDATION

percentage of retardation among those who leave the public school to go to work, is, then, more than twice as great as that among the children who are in school.

#### OCCUPATIONS ENTERED BY THE WORKING CHILDREN OF 1911-12

Let us consider for a moment what these children receive in exchange for school. Table VI shows the occupations which they entered. In Cincinnati, the shoe factories employ more children than any other one industry. Of the 2,366 children who began work during the year, 19 per cent entered shoe factories; 17.2 per cent became errand boys and girls for a large variety of business firms; 15.5 per cent went into department stores as cash or stock boys and girls, wrappers, or inside messengers; 8.7 per cent entered the tailoring and sewing trades; 6.8 per cent worked at home helping their parents; 5.2 per cent became telegraph messengers; 3.9 per cent entered paper-box factories; between 1 and 2 per cent were employed in each of the following: candy factories, office work, and private families; and the remaining 20 per cent were scattered over a wide range of occupations, no

<sup>1</sup> Calculated from the advance sheets of the "Age Report of Pupils for Year Ending June, 1912," from the *Report of the Superintendent of Schools of Cincinnati*, for the year 1911-12.

one of which comprised as many as 1 per cent of the children. Almost half of these miscellaneous occupations were in factories of various kinds. Eighty-seven per cent of the working children can, then, be ranged in five groups; working in factories, 33 per cent; running errands, 22.5 per cent; working in department stores, 15.5 per cent; sewing trades, 8.7 per cent, and assisting at home, 6.8 per cent.

TABLE VI  
OCCUPATIONS ENTERED BY CHILDREN BEGINNING TO WORK

Occupations	Boys		Girls		Totals	Percentage
	14	15	14	15		
Department stores.....	111	37	160	58	366	15.5
Errands.....	287	87	26	7	407	17.2
Tailoring and sewing.....	7	4	153	43	207	8.7
Shoe factories.....	167	74	149	59	449	19.0
Telegraph messenger.....	85	38	0	0	123	5.2
Office work.....	21	16	9	1	47	1.9
Paper box and paper goods.....	6	3	67	16	92	3.9
Candy factories.....	3	1	23	9	36	1.5
Working for parents.....	24	9	84	42	159	6.8
Private families.....	0	0	14	11	25	1.1
Miscellaneous.....	198	71	127	59	455	19.2
	909	340	812	305	2,366	100

A few of the occupations on this list include skilled work—for instance the shoe factories, the sewing trades, and the department stores. In many of the factories represented, in the messenger service, and in most that is included under the head of helping at home, there is no skilled work. But even in those industries which include skilled work, the first two years of employment for those who begin at fourteen are not made periods of training for skilled work, or apprenticeships in which the industry as a whole is learned. A child in a shoe factory, for instance, is taught but one or two of the one hundred and fifty or more processes involved in making a shoe. The children in the sewing trades pull bastings, or baste one kind of a seam. Apprenticeships in the dressmaking and millinery trades are rarely open to children under sixteen. In the department stores, the children run errands inside the store, or wrap packages. Many of the best department stores

and most of the skilled trades are entirely closed to children under sixteen.

There is, then, very little that counts as training in the occupations for children under sixteen—a fact which the children themselves realize. Many of them tell us that they hope to enter trades at sixteen and are meanwhile just earning a little money. It is a conservative statement to say that only a small proportion of these children find themselves any better fitted to earn a living at sixteen than they were when they began work at fourteen. Some of them, particularly those in the messenger service, are of less value in the industrial world as a result of these two years of work.

*[To be continued]*